

Item 3600-001-0001 Department of Fish and Game

7. One-Time General Fund Augmentations.

On or before February 1, 2007, the department shall provide a report to the Legislature on its expenditures of one-time General Fund augmentations in the 2006-07 Budget Act for activities in the marine region, salmon and steelhead restoration projects, nongame fish and wildlife trust resources, and funding for the Coastal Wetlands Account.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

FY 2006-07 – Coastal Wetlands Fund

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The South Coast Region currently owns and/or manages nine (9) distinct coastal wetlands properties (5,138 acres) in the five-county area including Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego counties. The lands were acquired through purchases (primarily with voter approved Bond Act funds), donations or mitigations. Some are considered State Tidelands and are owned in Fee Title by the State Lands Commission but are under long-term leases to the Department of Fish and Game (Department) for management. The coastal wetlands properties have been designated as Ecological Reserves by the Fish and Game Commission and are protected under Section 630, Title 14, California Code of Regulations (CCR). Each coastal wetland is unique in its characteristics, however, all can be classified as high profile, important to the local communities, and each has threatened or endangered species which the Department is mandated to protect, enhance and recover.

AUTHORITY

AB 1801, Chapter 47/48, Statutes of 2006-07, Item 3600-013-0001, directed the State Controller to transfer \$5,000,000 to the State Treasury in an interest-bearing account. The principal of the Coastal Wetlands Fund shall not be expended, and shall be maintained so that the interest earned by the account will provide a continuous source of funding for wetlands maintenance. The expectation is that the interest in the Coastal Wetlands Fund shall be appropriated in the annual Budget Act according to the following schedule:

- ♦ Sixty percent to the Department of Fish and Game for expenditure pursuant to Section 6217.9 of the Fish and Game Code for maintenance of coastal wetlands owned by the Department of Fish and Game.
- ♦ Forty percent to the State Coastal Conservancy for expenditure pursuant to Section 6217.9 for maintenance of coastal wetlands.

The Department of Fish and Game is the administering agency for the Coastal Wetlands Fund (3104) and is mandated to carry out the requirements of Fish and Game Code Section 6217.9 using 60% of the interest earned on the \$5,000,000 principal. The State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) will be establishing a similar program for non-Department coastal wetlands properties with the remaining 40% of the interest earned.

The Department and SCC will meet and confer on the best way to implement this requirement. The management and maintenance of Coastal Wetlands is a necessary function to protect and enhance species and habitats within coastal wetlands; to formulate management strategies for habitat preservation and enhancement efforts on both Department and private lands (via SCC); to emphasize current and expanded outreach programs on Department and private lands with particular emphasis on wetland habitats; and to gather and synthesize information on wildlife and habitat resources on Department lands and certain private land holdings to ensure the long-term conservation of species and habitats.

BUDGETED RESOURCES

The Department projects that approximately \$135,000 will be available in interest annually in the Coastal Wetlands Fund. This amount is 60% of the interest on the \$5,000,000 principal, calculated at the rate of ≤5% per annum per Public Resources Code 6217.9. The Department will require an appropriation in the annual budget to spend this annual interest.

The 2007-08 Governor's Budget proposes to augment the Department's budget by \$135,000 for one new permanent position in the classification of Wildlife Biologist, and operating costs to purchase materials or contract out necessary work at each site. One position for a Wildlife Biologist to staff California coastal wetland properties will:

- 1) increase the quality of service provided by establishing permanent personnel and expertise,
- 2) increase the ability to conduct and assess detailed biological data over the long-term,
- 3) lead to better decision making,
- 4) increase contact with the public, state and federal agencies regarding coastal wetlands, and
- 5) provide more focused management on coastal wetlands Ecological Reserves.

The Wildlife Biologist will work with existing staff to promote on-the-ground enhancement activities as identified in area Land Management Plans and implement recovery actions as identified in Species Recovery Plans.

The resources for the Wildlife Biologist and operating budget will allow the Department to perform necessary coastal wetlands management and monitoring activities anticipated throughout the South Coast Region. The properties will be managed in a manner that will improve habitats and species populations with the goal of maintaining associated threatened, endangered and other special status species in perpetuity on those lands.

A work program will be formalized to:

- 1) identify and carry out necessary management and monitoring activities, and
- 2) implement adaptive management strategies to enhance the species populations that these lands support.

The following nine Department properties will be managed and enhanced from the Coastal Wetlands Fund (3104):

<u>Ecological Reserve</u>	<u>County</u>
Goleta Slough ER	Santa Barbara
Ballona Wetlands ER	Los Angeles
Bolsa Chica ER	Orange
Upper Newport Bay ER	Orange
Buena Vista Lagoon ER	San Diego
Agua Hedionda Lagoon ER	San Diego
Batiquitos Lagoon ER	San Diego
San Elijo Lagoon ER	San Diego
San Dieguito Lagoon ER	San Diego